Frequently Asked Questions Regarding IT Consolidation

Volume 5

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There are changes happening at MN.IT Services over the next few months which, combined with our name change, represent a significant milestone for IT consolidation. Some will affect employees directly and immediately. Others will be behind the scenes. All of them are designed to continue the journey toward a single, consolidated IT organization that "provides high-quality, secure and cost-effective information technology that meets the business needs of government, fosters innovation, and improves outcomes for the people of Minnesota."

The above description of our future is not just a mission statement in our strategic plan. It is an active goal that MN.IT Services leadership and staff are working toward every day. And the changes chronicled in this FAQ represent a significant amount of behind-the-scenes work toward that goal by a great many people at MN.IT and beyond, and an evolution from the initial consolidation that occurred last fall.

These are exciting times. We believe that the changes represented here lay the groundwork for consistent and effective delivery of technology to state government and opportunities for career advancement for our 2100 talented employees. The changes also move us from strategic planning to tactical planning and execution.

The following FAQ for MN.IT employees covers a variety of topics related to changes that are occurring at MN.IT Services, including:

- Employee Administrative Transfers
- Seniority
- Other Changes for MN.IT Employees
- Service Level Agreements
- Planning and Governance
- Service Consolidation Questions

Employee Administrative Transfers

What is happening? What do you mean by "transfer"?

Starting July 4, IT staff currently working at executive branch agencies will begin to be transferred administratively to MN.IT Services. Basically, this means that the paperwork will catch up with what has already taken place. From the date of each employee's transfer, that employee will be accounted for in the State's systems and coding as a MN.IT Services employee.

Aren't we already MN.IT employees?

Yes. You have been a MN.IT employee since October 1, 2011. However, the transactional paperwork was impossible to execute in the six weeks between the passage of the law and its effective date. Since that time, a team from MN.IT, Admin and MMB has been working to iron out all the intricate details that make an administrative transfer possible (everything from how to code employees in SEMA4 to more complicated issues like seniority).

How many staff will be transferred?

There are currently about 1800 MN.IT employees to be administratively transferred from 70 agencies in the executive branch. That will bring the total in this agency to 2100, an impressive number of highly professional IT experts dedicated to serving state government.

Does that mean that I will get a paycheck from MN.IT Services?

Your electronic paycheck will continue to say "State of Minnesota," as it always has and all of your benefits, deductions, etc., will remain the same and uninterrupted.

Will I report to somebody new?

As you know, over the past few months, agency-based CIOs have created an Agency Centralized IT Reference Model, which defines the services we all provide and the functions we all perform in order to map out a centralized IT shop within each agency. This was the first step necessary for the administrative transfer to MN.IT Services. The process to get to this point was different for each MN.IT agency-based office, depending on the extent to which IT was already centralized.

This centralization within the agency has required, in some cases, some shifting of folks from program areas within the agency to a centralized structure headed by the agency-based CIO. That centralization process may have affected you already and, if so, the person that approves your time may have recently changed or may be scheduled to change in the future. However, most MN.IT employees will see no change.

How will the transfer work?

For many reasons, the transfer will take place in phases. The first phase will include those agency-based offices that 1) have already been centralized within the agency; and 2) are already on the SEMA4 self-service payroll system. At this time, we anticipate the first phase to include:

- Corrections
- Education
- Human Services
- Labor and Industry
- Pollution Control
- Veteran's Affairs

When will the transfers take place?

The first phase agency-based staff (see above) will be transferred on July 4, within SEMA4. The subsequent transfers are not set but are expected to occur within the next few months, dependent on resolving additional technical and administrative issues.

What does the transfer change?

- All MN.IT staff at agency-based offices, if they didn't already, will report within a single structure. Your agency-based CIO can provide more information on the details of this.

- The biggest change, though not inconsequential, is one most of us will never see - the coding within the depths of SEMA4.

- For those that are not yet using Self Service Time Entry, this will be a more noticeable change, as some of you move to a new system for payroll time entry.

- There are other changes happening within a similar timeframe. They are covered elsewhere in this document.

Will time tracking change?

For most of us, our payroll reporting will switch to the State's self-service payroll system, if that is not what we currently use. However, if your MN.IT office currently uses a second system to track time related to roles, responsibilities, and/or projects, you will continue to use your local system until we can develop time tracking that will work for MN.IT as a whole.

After I am officially transferred, where do I get HR services? Who do I call when I have questions?

Changes in HR responsibilities will not be directly linked to transfers and won't happen immediately. The HR services change will be staggered by agency-based office, based on how quickly we can build up a central staff. Therefore, your office may change over to central HR earlier or later than another agency-based office. We expect that we will have all HR responsibilities for all agency-based offices transferred by FY2014.

 In the meantime, please call the local HR office at the agency you serve for your HR questions. MN.IT Central employees continue to call the HR staff in COB.

Seniority

How will seniority units be structured for the new MN.IT organization?

MN.IT has one statewide seniority unit in each of the AFSCME, MAPE, and MMA contracts. On the effective date of your transfer (see above), you will be placed into the MN.IT seniority unit within your bargaining unit. For example, this means that MN.IT @ DNR MAPE employees and MN.IT @ Revenue MAPE employees will all be in the same seniority unit, as will all other MN.IT MAPE employees, regardless of agency-based office.

When will I officially be in the MN.IT seniority unit?

At the point that you are administratively transferred into MN.IT, you will move from your current seniority unit to the MN.IT seniority unit.

How will the transfer into the new seniority unit impact my current seniority ranking?

The pool of employees in the new MN.IT seniority unit will be larger than in your current seniority unit at the agency you come from. Your position on the MN.IT seniority roster will be dependent upon the make-up of the other employees that will comprise the new MN.IT seniority unit. Some employees may find that their position on the seniority roster remains relatively similar to their seniority at their current agency while others may find that their position on the seniority roster is significantly higher or lower than in his/her current seniority unit.

The phase in which you are administratively transferred will not impact your seniority ranking in the new MN.IT seniority roster. Seniority rosters list employees by classification seniority and state seniority. These dates are not impacted by an employee's start date at any particular agency, including MN.IT.

How will the new seniority roster affect me in a consolidation situation and my chances for future openings at MN.IT Services?

Seniority mainly comes into play when there are layoffs and does not significantly impact hiring other than for employees in the AFSCME bargaining unit. Given the amount of attrition coming down the pike, we don't anticipate any layoffs at this time. Employees should consult their contract language for further details on seniority units.

Will MN.IT Central staff automatically have higher seniority than transferring staff?

No. Seniority rosters list employees by classification seniority and state seniority. MN.IT Central employees will join the same combined seniority unit and have seniority based on their length of service, just like everybody else.

When will the MN.IT seniority unit rosters be posted?

The new MN.IT combined seniority rosters will be updated and posted on the MN.IT intranet, starting in July for employees as outlined under each bargaining unit contract.

Other Changes for MN.IT Employees

If I have been hired recently, does my probationary period begin again when I'm transferred?

The transfer will trigger no new probationary periods for long-term employees. Probationary periods currently in process for new employees will continue after the transfer.

Will HR and others policies change when I officially transfer?

Although we have all technically been employees of MN.IT since October, we will now begin to centralize some of the policies and functions for our new organization so that we can move from being a "virtual" to a real organization in which everyone is integrated as employees and service providers. This takes time. We are now in the process of reviewing individual agency and state policies to arrive at the most appropriate MN.IT versions that will meet our needs but cause the least disruption to how things have always been. Not an easy task, when you're consolidating 70 different environments.

Until the review and approval process takes place, you will be expected to follow the policies of the agency in which your office is located. MN.IT @ Central staff will continue to follow current MN.IT Central policies.

We will keep you updated on when new policies are approved and posted, and provide further instruction on how they should be followed and how they will be enforced. It's too early at this point to highlight all the details.

What if the MN.IT Services policies differ from those at the agency where I'm located?

It can be a bit confusing to become an employee of what, essentially, is a new agency, yet remain housed within another agency, and it is possible that final policies at the two places may differ slightly. However, we are working hard to review the best and most appropriate examples in order to develop ones most appropriate to our combined role at the State and to minimize the conflicts. It is too early to provide more details on the process by which we merge the different policies and make sure that you're able to work well within the culture and environment at which you are located. We'll keep you posted.

What other MN.IT-wide changes will happen with the transfers?

You will see more changes in the coming months in areas such as organization-wide communications, awards programs, training, etc. Committees have been formed to address each of these topics, and you can expect to see more changes as decisions are made. We will continue to communicate these changes so that they do not come as a surprise.

How will I stay informed about what is going on at the agency where my office is located?

Teamwork with your business partners will be more important than ever, and your connection to the people that you serve is something we want to preserve. We have asked all agency leadership – including agency communications directors - to keep MN.IT employees in the know about what is going on in the agencies where they work, including building issues, events, new hires, business priorities, etc.

This is not only important for the work that you do, but for the relationships that you have developed over the years and for the commitment you feel for the programs that you serve. It is important to keep that connection. We will also be instituting regular news channels for your local MN.IT office. This will be part of the committee work that is now getting started.

Should I identify myself as a MN.IT employee? How do I do that?

Yes. You are part of the MN.IT Services team and should identify yourself accordingly in correspondence, etc. Please refer to the FAQ <https://connect.mn.gov/sites/StateIT/SitePages/FAQs%20about%20Name%20Change.aspx> that has been published regarding MN.IT's new name and the relevant naming conventions.

A more complete communications manual is under development.

Will my job change with the transfer? Will I move physically?

The administrative transfer is completely separate from any physical moves of staff and does not imply any changes to the work that you do. Changes to how and where we deliver services will only be made as we collectively analyze the opportunities for more effective and efficient services. Even then, the physical movement of personnel will probably be minimal.

Service Level Agreements

Is the employee transfer connected to the Service Level Agreements that are required in law?

The activity to transfer employees is not entirely related to the Service Level Agreement activity, but they are both requirements of the consolidation law and they both will take place at approximately the same time.

The law requires that all IT services to the executive branch – regardless of where or how they are delivered – be managed through "service level agreements" by June 30, 2012. To meet this requirement, MN.IT Services is creating a Comprehensive Service Level Agreement that includes all IT services in a single document. The agreement is tailored individually to reflect the "as is" services at each agency. The agreement describes what services the agency receives from all of MN.IT Services, the service levels for each service, the costs for each service, and the metrics by which each service will be measured. The agreement will include all IT services, i.e., those that are delivered centrally, those that are delivered locally, and those that may be contracted through a third party. ALL IT activity that an agency uses is included in the agreement.

This is new for the State of Minnesota and is an exciting step forward for us all. In fact, Minnesota is one of the first states in the nation to develop a service level agreement for all IT services, and other states are paying close attention. We can all be very proud of this achievement and the way in which it will facilitate our operations.

The Comprehensive Service Level Agreement is a living document that will be used by both MN.IT Services and agency leadership to plan priorities and projects for IT. It will help us define the real effort and cost it takes to deliver any particular service, and help us identify opportunities for improvement. For our customers, it will help them understand just what they get for their money and how they can know that we're all doing a good job through metrics and service levels.

Will the Comprehensive Service Level Agreements change the way in which we deliver services or change the expectations our customers have?

In this first iteration, the Comprehensive Service Level Agreements will only describe the "as is" state of IT service at your agency. It will not change any services or service levels, per se. However, it begins a conversation with your customers that, we expect, will eventually align their expectations with the services we provide. We expect that as the service agreements mature, the negotiations between service provider and customer will result in better clarity of roles and accountability, which, ultimately, means better service and happier customers.

How will I know what's in the Comprehensive Service Level Agreement? Where can I see the agreement for my agency-based office?

Once each Comprehensive Service Level Agreement has been delivered to agency leadership, it will be shared with staff. It is important to remember that the SLAs are living documents that will change as our services mature and as your agency priorities change.

What if the "as is" state in the agreement does not describe what the agency customer expects?

The initial "as is" agreements may contain some surprises because, in most cases, IT budgets have never been broken down by service type, and service levels have never been written down before. However, we do expect that the agreements will reflect the current state of service delivery at your office and, therefore, the impact on what you do on a day-to-day basis should not change significantly. Over the next year, we'll all be looking at opportunities to level-set services and processes in instances where an agency is not getting what it needs. Having a written agreement will help clarify gaps and the requirements, costs and changes that will be necessary to better meet the need in years to come.

Why does the Comprehensive Service Level Agreement describe a service management process and service levels that are different than how we do things at our agency?

The measure of a successful, high-functioning IT organization is how well it utilizes standard processes to deliver customized services. We are a single organization now, and need to work within a bigger picture. "What" you deliver to your agency customers may well be unique – at least in the area of unique applications – but the methodology by which we all deliver services can be categorized in common, industry-standard terms and processes that allow us to predict and track outcomes and improve services. That is our goal. Not to make the solutions cookie-cutter, but to apply best practices so that our service levels for both common and unique services are standard across the State. The processes we adopt together will be based on proven industry standards.

We know that the implementation and standardization of key processes is a very long journey that involves a lot of planning, training, and a new way of thinking. Some of you are well along that path, some are just beginning. That is why the SLAs describe the standard and then provide customization for the "as is" process and service levels at each agency-based office.

Meanwhile, agency-based CIOs are working together to develop the highest priority standard processes so that as an agency we can progress toward common service levels and procedures. We are focusing first on those cross-functional processes that are foundational to dependable IT management, starting with Incident Management. We want to be realistic and strategic about what process improvement we can manage at this time.

Planning and Governance

How does decision-making work for MN.IT now that we are consolidated? Where can I find out information about the governance structure and committees?

The Minnesota IT Governance Framework is a document that is being published on the MN.IT Services website. The document outlines the authority of the State CIO and the governance process for decision-making about how IT is delivered at the State. The framework includes how customers and stakeholders participate in the decisions we make here at MN.IT.

The Minnesota IT Governance Framework focuses on decision making at the enterprise level and does not address in detail the operational decision making process within individual divisions and/or agency-based offices.

The framework describes the roles of various committees in terms of RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted and informed). The committees are divided into two key areas: Strategic Planning, and Technology Operations Alignment. Each governance committee is co- chaired by MN.IT executive leadership and an agency-based CIO.

Once the Comprehensive Service Level Agreements are complete, we will turn our attention to setting the framework in motion and organizing the working teams (some are already functioning, but will be recalibrated to the specifications of the framework).

In addition to those governance groups outlined in the Minnesota IT Governance Framework, several management committees have been created to which managers from MN.IT's agency-based and central offices have volunteered. They include: Communications Team, Employee Recognitions Team, Enterprise Training Team, Communities of Interest Planning Team, and an IT Awards Committee.

Who makes MN.IT agency operational policy and decisions? And do operational decisions apply just to MN.IT Central?

We are a single organization, managed – like other agencies – by a single decision making structure. MN.IT Services is led by Commissioner Carolyn Parnell, State CIO. The Commissioner and her Executive Team are responsible for all MN.IT operational and HR policy and decisions with input from leadership within all of the divisions, including agency-based offices. There is also an active management team of all managers and supervisors at MN.IT.

All MN.IT operational and HR policies, strategies and decisions are applicable to all MN.IT staff and all MN.IT offices, regardless of function or location.

All IT-related policies and standard decisions are made through the governance process that is depicted in the Minnesota IT Governance Framework (above).

What is the IT Master Plan and how does it affect the planning we do at our MN.IT office, and how does it affect priorities and planning for all of MN.IT?

The Minnesota IT Master Plan provides a five-year outlook on the goals and priorities for the information technology we collectively provide to the State of Minnesota. It was developed through a collaborative process between State business and IT leadership, as well as IT employees, and was published in April 2012. As MN.IT begins tactical planning for what projects to institute in the next few years at both the enterprise and individual agency level, the IT Master Plan will serve as a guide. All planning – whether at the MN.IT enterprise level or the agency-based level – will be based on the strategies of the Master Plan.

What is the difference between the IT Master Plan and the MN.IT Services Strategic Plan?

The Minnesota IT Master Plan (above) describes, at a high level, the technology goals for the State – the "what" of IT. The MN.IT Services Strategic Plan is an internal document for MN.IT employees, describing the immediate goals for our organization, including our mission, vision and values - the "how". Both plans apply to all MN.IT Services activity and staff.

The agency that I serve has a strategic plan that is different than MN.IT Services' strategic plan. Which one should I follow?

As employees of MN.IT Services, the MN.IT Services Strategic Plan directs all of our work. The MN.IT Services Strategic Plan addresses our mutual priorities as we build a new IT organization that is high-performing and responsive. We do not expect, however, that it conflicts with the strategies of the agency that you serve and we

encourage you to be very familiar with and respect the strategies of your business partner. If you see a conflict, please bring it up to your supervisor or agency-based CIO so that it can be clarified and/or addressed.

Service Consolidation Questions

Are all services going to be consolidated? And if so, are they going to be consolidated at MN.IT Central?

We can all expect changes in service delivery over the next few years, but we should not expect that all services will automatically be consolidated, or that all consolidated services will be moved to the same office. The next phase of tactical planning will identify the services where it is both practical and advantageous to consolidate, and then we will figure out how, when and where it makes most sense. Even for those services that it makes sense to change, we can't do it all at once. We have to do it in a way that does not disrupt business functions and that ensures our success.

Some service delivery – even if delivery processes are standardized - will always remain at an agency-based office because it makes sense to be close to the customer.

How and when will we know what services are going to be consolidated and how that will affect my job?

Any decision to consolidate, combine or share a particular IT service or staff will be a business decision that is made by the organization after careful business analysis. The current work that is being done now to present the "as is" state of service delivery at each agency (see Service Level Agreements, above) will help us identify places where we can improve the work we do and the services we deliver by combining resources. We will keep you informed well in advance of any changes.

Will my agency-based office have any input into the consolidation planning?

Your office, through your agency-based CIO and managers, will be heavily involved in the analysis of service delivery strategies through the governance framework that is being created to help the State CIO with decision making (see above). This process has already begun with the analysis being done now for the Comprehensive Service Level Agreements. When they're done, we'll take a look at how we are collectively managing our services and resources, and where there might be opportunities to improve.

If the function I perform is consolidated, will I automatically lose my job or will I have a chance to apply for a job in the centralized function… or for something else?

The details are being worked out on how we manage the process for consolidation that is in the best interest of our employees and the State. Rest assured that there will be a fair way for ALL people interested in a consolidated function to apply for the positions in that function AND that there will be opportunities available for those that may be interested in pursuing another direction. For many, the changes ahead will represent new opportunities for career growth within the State of Minnesota. As Commissioner Parnell has said on many occasions, with the number of retirements occurring now and projected in the near future and with the resulting "brain drain," we are interested in keeping everyone here and busy at functions and services that meet their skills and interests.

Should I be applying to MN.IT Central job openings to be sure that I am in the right place in case consolidation of my function occurs down the road?

All job openings at MN.IT Services – regardless of location – are open to all and you are welcome to apply to those that interest you and for which you qualify. MN.IT Central staff will not have any particular advantage over any other MN.IT staff member for any positions now or in the future.

I feel very passionate about the agency, the programs and the citizens that I currently serve, and about the work that I do. I'm worried that my job will change and/or I'll be moved to another office.

Our first obligation is to continue providing for the business needs of our agency customers, and that means being sure that the services and the people they need are doing what needs to be done to provide good service. No one will be reassigned arbitrarily and without good reason. However, there will be cases where we can continue to provide the same level and quality of service by combining forces. In those cases, we will do whatever we can to be sure that your passion for your customer and the citizens are respected and leveraged the best way possible.

There's a lot of knowledge at other agencies that I would like to tap for my professional development and/or to do my job better. How can I get to know and take advantage of the knowledge base of my peers?

A committee has been formed to propose a means by which MN.IT can establish communities of interest that will facilitate knowledge-sharing between MN.IT staff and MN.IT offices. We hope to have more information on this shortly so that we can begin this very valuable cross-pollination of skills and ideas. Watch **Morning Java** and the MN.IT intranet for more information.

More Questions?

If you have questions, contact the Communications Group at MN.IT_Comm@state.mn.us. We look forward to sharing more information and more answers in the coming weeks.